Cholera infantum

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Cholera Infantum.

Of the history of Cholera Infantum, not much need be said: It has been so correctly pointed out by those who have written on the subject, and is so very uniform in its appearance, that it would be more than useless for me to quote the different authors who have illustrated its Character, in the respective Countries in which they practised. To avoid therefore useless details I shall confine myself to a few of those Authorities, who at the present day are, by general consent allowed to stand preeminent.

Cholera is derived from the greek word χολή, bile, and ρέω, to flow, a genus of disease arranged by Cullen, in the Class Neuroses, and

and order Spasm. It might be expected that I should here for a while expatiate on the subject, but as long experience is necessary to enable us to write with accuracy on any subject, I shall content myself with a few observations. This disease is not confined to any particular Country: Every part of the Vast Globe has on the Contrary experienced its ravages. It is said by Authors to prevail most in the months of Autumn: but we sometimes meet with cases during the Chilling blasts of winter. It is said to prevail mostly in crowded places as Hospitals, and other receptacles of filth. In most of the large towns of the United States. It is a disease principally of warm Climates, and it partakes of the Remitting Type of fever. This disease is aggravated by the heat of the weather, hence more Children are said to die in August, than in any other month. Children between one and two years of age, are

are peculiarly liable to this disease. I shall not be very minute in detailing the various symptoms of Cholera Infantum, as they have been pointed out by authors. In most instances Cholera Infantum commences with a diarrhœa, which continues several days without any other symptom of indisposition; but frequently a violent vomiting, and purging, and high fever, precede it. The matter discharged from the stomach and bowels is generally yellow, or green; the stools are sometimes slimy and bloody, without any tincture of bile; worms are frequently discharged I have seen thirty and forty, discharged in the course of a few hours. Children in this stage of the disease appear to suffer a good deal of pain, the pulse is quick and weak the head usually warm, while the extremities retain their natural heat. The head is in many instances so much affected as to produce delirium. An intense thirst attends every stage of the disease. Through the whole course of the disease the stools are frequently large, and extremely

fetid, but in some instances they are without smell and resemble drinks, and Aliments.

Causes. they are various being, such as induce debility either directly, or indirectly, of the intestines. Vicissitudes of weather alternating from heat to Cold, and particularly so when the Atmosphere is moist. In warm Climates and seasons, after extremely hot and dry weather a fall of rain cooling the Atmosphere seems well Calculated to bring on this disease, and it is very probable, that ~~and it is very probable that~~ an Obstructed perspiration may have also a share in this, tho we frequently Observe the disease to appear when no change in the temperature of the air nor any application of Cold has been observed. The inattention of parents to Change their Childrens Clothing, and to adapt it to the Vicissitudes of weather, is said to lay the foundation for Cholera Infantum. Dentition, may act as an exciting cause, hence we perceive this disease to be more violent at that age than at any other. This disease is brought into action by improper articles in diet, Clothing &c. The

the fruits of the season are a most prolific source of this disease. Children under such circumstances should abstain from all kinds of fruit, nothing in my Opinion has a tendency so readily to produce this disease as the too great indulgence in sour fruits. I have seen it brought on repeatedly by eating Apples grapes et Cetera. Worms have been suspected as being a cause of this disease. It is generally believed that Cholera Infantum, is brought on by the heat and impure air of our large Cities, during the summer months.

Appearance on Dissection.

The appearances which the dissection of those who have died of this disease, present to us, are the following:— Inflammation, may be traced through the whole extent of the Alimentary Canal, but more particularly so in the mucous membrane, dark and livid spots, are to be seen on this Coat, in the stomach and small intestines, but more so in the duodenum, just below the Pylorus. the large intestines much

affected except in cases which go on to Dysentery in this we frequently discover ulceration, and Abscess. The Liver is sometimes very much affected, in protracted cases being occasionally enlarged to double its natural size. The Gall bladder is usually distended with vitiated bile. The Pancreas is occasionally affected, I have had several opportunities of examining patients who have died of Cholera Infantum, and have generally found all the Abdominal viscera more or less affected, the great intestines either mortified, or partly inflam=ed and mortified. The mesenteric glands conside=rably enlarged, and a number of livid spots about the rectum.

Diagnosis.

Almost all the diseases which infest the Alimentary Canal, do in some measure bear an analogy to Cholera Infantum, yet we can distinguish it from them with facility, this we shall be able to do by inspecting the

the evacuations. It may be distinguished from the Dysentery by the nature of the discharges, by not being attended with Tormina, and Tenesmus, in the commencement &c. I shall not go on to mention the tedious route by which it may be distinguished from the other diseases of a similar nature. as it would require more time than I am disposed to allow. I shall therefore proceed to speak of the

Prognosis.

This may be favourable in all mild attacks and even in more violent ones a hope may justly be indulged, if we subdue the fever in a short time, but if not more serious Consequences are liable to ensue Abscess, general forms as I have witnessed several times. Vertigo, Syncope, in an erect posture great loss of muscular power, and considerable irritability of the stomach, a small quick intermitting pulse, subsultus tendinum these are unfavourable and indicate great danger. A recovery may be expected when the above enumerated symptoms are not so violent.

Method of Cure.

As to the treatment of Cholera Infantum, no little diversity of Opinion has existed among our best practitioners. how this discordance of Opinion took its rise can only be accounted for from the different modifications of the disease, the Climate in which it existed or from the peculiar situation in which patients are often located. All these circumstances might at one time or other have been either favourable or unfavourable for the patient. This in my Opinion is one of the most potent reasons of such a multiplicity of sentiments concerning the true method, not only of curing this, but of every other disease common to mankind. and this is the cause why that harmony of sentiment cannot exist among physicians as well as among other professional Characters. It would be tedious for me therefore to mention all the Opinions which have been offered before the public as the results of long and correct experience, I shall confine myself to those which best accord with my own. The first step towards the cure of

of this troublesome disease depends on many circumstances, In the first place the remedies to be used must be in proportion to the violence of the disease; and we should not neglect to keep in view the climate in which the disease exists – the time of the year – the strength of the patient, all these will assist in making up our minds relative to the true method of cure. If in the first place there is much inflammation which is very generally the case nothing is so well calculated to subdue it as venesection. but in many instances it commences with a disordered state of the Alimentary Canal in such cases our earliest endeavours should be directed to its evacuation but as regards the precise course to be pursued to effect this purpose, there is by no means the same unanimity of sentiment. Castor Oil generally preferd for this purpose, no doubt in very mild cases this would answer very well, it passes readily through the intestines and occasions little or no griping, the only difficulty is in getting Children to take it. The best way therefore, of giving it is in combination with a little sugar as this

in some measure prevents the bitterness of the Oil. But we frequently meet with cases attended with violent vomiting: the patient vomiting up the medicine as fast as exhibited. In such instances I have found the anodyne injections, to answer extremely well; fomentations of warm cloths, applied to the epigastric region, lime water and milk, and the Neutral Mixture, have all been found very beneficial. After this indication has been properly fulfilled we should then resort to Cathartics. These are most important medicines, in the cure of Cholera Infantum, they are not only necessary to remove the constipation attendant upon it, but are highly useful by exciting an increased secretion from the mucous membrane of the healthy intestines. For this purpose nothing have I seen to answer so well as the mercurial purges, in Combination with Opium, these should be given in small doses this acts very effectually as a purge while at the same time the spasmodic uneasiness is in a great measure mitigated, by the Opium which enters into the Compound. The purging should

be continued ~~be continued~~ for a while, such some of the Neutral Salts; what I have found to answer very well is the Epsom Salts. Rhubarb has been recommended but possessing something of an astringent property practitioners have generally laid it aside It is important to continue the purging for some time, where there are strong indications of bilious accumulations. Every case of Cholera Infantum is marked by great inequality of temperature, while one portion of the body is parching hot, another part is very Cold, here nothing have I seen to answer so well as the warm bath, by immersion we equalize the temperature, and diffuse a glow over the whole surface. It is highly necessary that this should be continued every day as its effects are merely evanescent. Blisters, these are very important in the Cure of this disease they prove serviceable by causing a translation of morbid excitement from one part, to some other. much attention must be paid to the grade of inflammation. Some difference of Opinion has existed as to the size

of the blister, it is now generally conceded that it should be large enough to cover the Abdomen. many practitioners prefer the extremities, for their application on account of the great inconvenience which the patient experiences on going to stool. this I conceive to be totally unnecessary, and should therefore apply them to the former part. Much advantage is said to be derived from stimulating embrocations to the surface. In the treatment of this disease authors differ but little in regard to its latter stages; and their difference there is but of little consequence. for unless it has been properly managed in the beginning, the patient is generally indebted for his recovery to the strength of his Constitution, or to some fortunate change that time, and not medicine, effects in his habits. After a few days and even months the disease passes into a Diarrhoea, attended with some degree of Tormina and Tenesmus, it is usual at this conjuncture, to find the stomach greatly debilitated, with a total loss of the powers of digestion, and in many cases very irritable.

The remedies at this stage of the disease are the Alka-lies and Cretaceous preparations. the following I have seen to answer extremely well ℞ Creta preparata ℥ij ~~Laudanum Opii~~ gtts XV. Saccarum Album ℥j Aqua ℥iij M. the dose of this mixture ℥ji every two or three hours the Alkalies may be used thus. ℞ Salts Tartar ℥j. Laudanum gtts XV. white Sugar ℥j. Water ℥iij. the dose of this mixture a table spoonful every two or three hours. Rhubarb may at this time be resorted to with considerable advantage the following preparation is very much used this is admira-bly adapted to the Complaint. ℞. Rhubarb X grains Calcined Magnesia XXX grains Laudanum gtts XV. Oil of Anise gtts. iii or iv Water ℥iij. M. the dose ℥ij every two or three hours these preparations are particularly calculated to relieve the Tormina & Tenesmus, which are apt to occur. Enemas of melted butter deprived of its salt, I have seen used with great advantage it is necessary that this should be used pretty copiously. As the disease still progresses it looses most of its painful symptoms, and be-comes a simple diarrhoea, here the mineral astringents

come in with advantage. among the best of them is Allum this is generally given in combination with a little Opium two or three grains of Allum with one sixth of a grain of Opium. The Vegetable Astringents have also been tried, and with various success, Columbo, this should be used in form of powder, but the remedy which I have seen to answer extremely well and in my Opinion should be preferred to all the other Vegetables Astringents is the common Black berry root, this should be given in the form of decoction. It should be boiled in vinegar and sweetened with loaf sugar. this I have seen used again and again with unequivocal utility. — It remains for me to say a few words respecting the proper regimen. In the mild varieties of this disease there is no necessity for a very strict regimen. but in the inflammatory cases the patient should abstain from all substances of a stimulating nature, such as wine, Porter, Ale, &c. The diet should consist of the farinaceous preparations such as Rice, Sago, Tapioca, — After all the only sovereign

remedy, is a change of Climate or Air. so long as the Child remains in the City and is exposed to the Operation of those Causes which produce the disease, we may palliate, but hardly ever effect a permanent Cure. In such a Case a Country residence is preferable. To prevent a disease so fatal in its occurrence, becomes a high duty. for the accomplishing of which the following rules are necessary. The Child should never be weaned under twelve months, Where a predisposition exists to Cholera Infantum exist we should employ the Cold bath. The Child should wear flannel. It is necessary that the gums of the Child be scarified occasionally.